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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

ACDA-05 OMB-01 /074 W
---------- 092210
R 281727Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1475
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08061

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK(NI)
SUBJECT: HMG ON ALLEGED TROOP WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT

REF: LONDON 7922

SUMMARY: NI SECRETARY REES EXPANDED ON HIS MAY 25 DENIAL OF CLERGYMAN ARLOW'S ALLEGATION THAT HMG PROMISED IRA THAT IT WOULD WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM NI IF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION FAILS (REFTEL), BUT DID NOT WAIVER FROM EARLIER POSITION THAT ARLOW ASSERTION WAS WITHOUT BASIS IN FACT. DISCUSSIONS WITH HMG OFFICIALS REVEALED THAT ARLOW'S STATEMENT WAS INOPPORTUNE, BUT NOT UNEXPECTED -- HE ONLY RECENTLY RETURNED FROM VISIT TO US WHERE HE MADE SIMILAR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. ACCORDINGLY, GOVERNMENT REACTION HAD BEEN MEASURED AND FAR SHORT OF "POLITICAL CRISIS" REPORTED BY PRESS. HMG SOURCES BELIEVE REACTION IN ULSTER HAS BEEN "PREDICTABLE" AND REPORT THAT AS OF COB MAY 27 IRISH GOVERNMENT HAD NOT BEEN HEARD FROM, DESPITE PRESS REPORTS OF IMMINENT IRISH PROTEST. THESE SOURCES ATTRIBUTE ABSENCE OF GOI REACTION TO GENERALLY CLOSE LIAISON BETWEEN HMG AND GOI AND TO LAST WEEK'S VISIT TO LONDON BY SIX MEMBERS OF DAIL. END SUMMARY.

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1. NI SECRETARY REES MAY 27 ELABORATED ON TERSE EARLIER

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DENIAL OF REV. WILLIAM ARLOW'S ASSERTION HMG HAD COMMITTED ITSELF TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM NI AND THAT FAILURE OF NI CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION WOULD TRIGGER IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS COMMITMENT (REFTEL). REES POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD REPEATEDLY ASSURED PARLIAMENT AND BRITISH AND IRISH PEOPLE THAT "GENUINE AND SUSTAINED" CESSATION OF VIOLENCE WOULD LEAD TO PROGRESSIVE REDUCTION OF TROOP LEVELS, BUT AFFIRMED THAT HMG WILL NOT "SELL OUT" IN NI. THERE HAD, HE SAID, BEEN NO CHANGE IN THIS POLICY, NOR HAD THERE BEEN ANY "DEAL" WITH IRA.

2. NI OFFICE UNDER SECRETARY DENIS TREVELYAN ADVISED EMBOFF THAT WHILE HMG IS CONCERNED WITH POSSIBLE IMPACT OF ARLOW STATEMENT, STATEMENT ITSELF HAD BEEN EXPECTED AND WAS NOT CAUSE FOR ALARM. ACCORDING TO TREVELYAN, ARLOW RECENTLY RETURNED FROM TRIP TO US WHERE HE HAD MADE SIMILAR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHICH BRITISH EMBASSY HAD ATTEMPTED TO REFUTE. REACTIONS OF PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC POLITICIANS IN ULSTER, TREVELYAN SAID, WERE ENTIRELY PREDICTABLE AND DO NOT CONSTITUTE SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO CONVENTION. MOST TROUBLESOME ASPECT OF ARLOW AFFAIR, HE SAIO, WAS ITS TIMING. COMING ON THREE-DAY HOLIDAY, IT CAUGHT NIO OFFICIALS AWAY FROM THEIR DESKS AND IT TOOK OVER 12 HOURS JUST TO ISSUE THE ORIGINAL DENI.AL

3. TREVELYAN WAS AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN ARLOW'S RATIONALE FOR MAKING ALLEGATION. HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT ARLOW HAD REMAINED IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH IRA SINCE DECEMBER 1974 AND MAY HAVE BEEN DUPED BY THEM. IN VIEW OF ARLOW'S FINE REPUTATION AND OBVIOUS SINCERITY, HE DID NOT THINK ARLOW INTENDED TO UNDERMINE CONVENTION OR POSSIBLE INTER-SECTARIAN POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION. INDEED, HE THOUGHT TIMING OF STATEMENT INDICATED ARLOW WAS NAIVE AND OF BENIGN INTENT. COMING AT BEGINNING OF TWO-WEEK PARLIAMENTARY RECESS, TEMPEST IS LIKELY TO BE FORGOTTEN BY TIME PARLIAMENT RETURNS FOLLOWING EC REFERENDUM. AS TO POSSIBLE HMG OPTIONS IN EVENT CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION FAILS, TREVELYAN REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM NI WOULD BE POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE AND THAT PROLONGED PERIOD OF CONTINUED DIRECT RULE WAS MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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VIABLE ALTERNATIVE, AT LEAST AT THIS POINT.

4. FCO IRISH AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, G. W. HARDING, TOLD EMBOFF THAT DESPITE PRESS REPORTS GOI PLANNED TO MAKE URGENT INQUIRIES REGARDING ARLOW ALLEGATION, NO APPROACHES HAD BEEN MADE TO HMG OR TO BRITISH EMBASSY IN DUBLIN BY COB MAY 27. WHILE BOTH FCO AND NIO EXPECT TO HEAR FROM IRISH, THEY BELIEVE GOI HAS ACCEPTED THEIR EARLIER ASSUR-

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ANCES THAT HMG DOES NOT PLAN WITHDRAWAL IN EVENT CONVEN-
TION FAILS AND THAT IT DID NOT REACH ANY SECRET AGREE-
MENTS WITH PROVISIONAL IRA. IN THIS REGARD, TREVELYAN
NOTED THAT IRISH PM COSGRAVE MIGHT SEEK TO DAMPEN IRISH

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

ACDA-05 OMB-01 /074 W
---------- 092232
R 281727Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1476
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 08061

DOMESTIC REACTION TO ARLOW STATEMENT BY REQUESTING MEET-
ING WITH WILSON WHICH, IN ANY EVENT. IS DUE SHORTLY AS
PART OF CONTINUING HMG/GOI DIALOGUE ON NI.

5. BOTH TREVELYAN AND HARDING CHARACTERIZED GOI ATTITUDE
AS "UNDERSTANDING AND SYMPATHETIC," AND CITED MAY 20-23
VISIT OF SIX MEMBERS OF DAIL (TOM KELLY, PADDY HARTE,
MICHAEL O'KENNEDY, RUAIRI BRUGHA, LIAM CUNNINGHAM AND JOE
BERMINGHAM) TO LONDON AS EVIDENCE OF THIS ATTITUDE.
THESE MPS, WHO REPRESENT THREE MAJOR IRISH POLITICAL
PARTIES, MET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (FCO AND NIO) AND
BACKBENCHERS FROM MAJOR BRITISH PARTIES. THEY ALL, AC-
CORDING TO TREVELYAN, SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE
HMG'S POLICY AND AIMS IN NI. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF
VISIT, HOWEVER, WAS THEIR MEETING WITH LEADER OF COMMONS
UUUC GROUP, JAMES MOLYNEAUX. ACCORDING TO TREVELYAN,
DAIL GROUP WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED WITH MOLYNEAUX, WHO,
INTER ALIA, REVEALED FULL APPRECIATION OF CATHOLIC MINORI

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TY'S POSITION AND ACKNOWLEDGED NEED TO FIND MUTUALLY AC-
CEPTABLE POWER SHARING ARRANGEMENT. EVEN NIO, TREVELYAN
SAID, WAS SURPRISED AT DAIL GROUP'S ACCOUNT OF
MOLYNEAUX'S STATEMENTS. TREVELYAN CAUTIONED THAT THIS
INFORMATION SHOULD BE HELD CLOSELY, AS IRISH PARLIAMEN-
TARIANS WERE CONCERNED THAT PUBLICITY ABOUT THEIR TRIP,
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AND ESPECIALLY MEETING WITH MOLYNEAUX, COULD BE POLITI-
CALLY DAMAGING IN IRELAND.

6. COMMENT: WHILE TREVELYAN MAY BE A BIT TOO SANGUINE
ABOUT POTENTIAL IMPACT OF ARLOW'S STATEMENT IN ULSTER
(AND PERHAPS DUBLIN), WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ALLEGA-
TION ITSELF IS WITHOUT FACTUAL FOUNDATION. AT THIS
POINT WE ARE ALSO INCLINED TO ACCEPT HIS JUDGMENT THAT
RESULTING FUROR IS MERELY ANOTHER TEMPEST IN THE EVER-
BUBBLING IRISH TEAPOT. END COMMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMISTICE, AGREEMENTS, ALLEGATIONS, TROOP REDUCTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON08061
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750186-0697
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750514/aaaaambe.tel
Line Count: 193
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 7922
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <05 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HMG ON ALLEGED TROOP WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, UK, EI, IRA, (ARLOW, WILLIAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006